

Message Text

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ACTION AGRE-00

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 COME-00 EB-07 /020 W

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R 051541Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9551

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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PASS USDA/FAS/GRAIN & FEED/NOVOTNY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, UR

SUBJECT: USSR: 1976 GRAIN HARVEST

1. AGATTACHE UNABLE TO OBTAIN ANY NEW FULLY DEFINITIVE INFORMATION ON CROP. EFFORTS TO OBTAIN APPOINTMENTS AT MIN.AG., MAIN ADMINISTRATION CEREALS, AND HYDROMET WERE UNSUCCESSFUL.

2. TALKS WITH OTHER WESTERN CONTACTS ALSO TURNED UP NOTHING MAJOR. CANADIAN IS STILL AT 200, AND GERMAN HAS RAISED HIS ESTIMATE TO 210. REUTERS' COMMENT WAS THAT "LOOKS LIKE YOU AMERICANS HAVE BEEN RIGHT ALL ALONG THAT IT'S GOING TO BE BIG CROP," BUT HE HAD COUPLE OF HORROR STORIES AS TO HARVEST CROP LOSSES IN EUROPEAN USSR.

3. SLADEK, TRADEX, GENEVA, CALLED LAST EVENING ON ANOTHER MATTER. HIS ANSWER TO QUESTION OF WHAT IS THEIR CURRENT ESTIMATE WAS ONLY THAT MINNEAPOLIS NOW FINALLY AGREES WITH USDA LEVEL PREDICTION.

4. ONLY OFFICIAL SOVIET GENERAL NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT WAS TASS RELEASE AROUND SEPT. 15 SAYING SIMPLY THAT OUTLOOK FOR 1976 CROPS OF GRAIN, COTTON, SUNFLOWER, ETC., WAS GOOD. THEN, THERE WERE THE ALMA-ATA ANNOUNCEMENTS ABOUT KAZQKHSTAN CROPS, AND MESYATS AND BREZHNEV OFF-RECORD
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COMMENTS. FORMER INDICATED CROP WILL BE QUITE GOOD TO

BRITISH DIPLOMAT, AND THAT IT WOULD BE OVER 200 MILLION TONS TO YUGOSLAV NEWSMEN. FIRST SECRETARY'S PARTING, OFF-HAND TYPE COMMENT TO HARRIMAN WAS THAT CROP WOULD BE NEW RECORD AND THAT AMERICANS HAD BEEN RAISING THEIR ESTIMATES, WHICH WAS THE CORRECT THING TO DO.

5. WHEN ASKED IF GRAIN PROCUREMENTS WOULD REACH NEW HIGH THIS YEAR, MIN. PROCUREMENT OFFICIALS ADVISED USDA GRAIN STORAGE TEAM TODAY THAT 87.5 MILLION TON PROCUREMENT GOAL

FOR 1976 IS EXPECTED TO BE ACHIEVED. FURTHER, THIS WOULD BE SECOND HIGHEST IN HISTORY, BUT THAT FINAL RESULTS WOULD NOT BE KNOWN UNTIL DECEMBER, WHEN WE WOULD BE INFORMED. DEPUTY MIN. KOVALEV ALSO CONFIRMED KNOWN 1976 EUROPEAN HARVEST DIFFICULTIES WITH GRAIN AND OTHER COMMODITIES, AND STATED THAT KAZAKHSTAN CROP WAS HARVESTED UNDER EXCELLENT CONDITIONS AND IS OF HIGH QUALITY.

6. COMMENT: (A) BASIS ABOVE AND OTHER PREVIOUSLY REPORTED CROP INFORMATION, THERE APPEARS LITTLE DOUBT THAT CROP VOLUME-WISE IS GOOD ONE, POSSIBLY EVEN NEW RECORD UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS SIMPLY NOT SUFFICIENT DATA AVAILABLE IN MOSCOW TO FURTHER QUANTIFY USDA'S CURRENT ESTIMATE ON SOUND STATISTICAL BASIS. AGATTACHE OFFICE, NEVERTHELESS, FEELS THAT SOME INCREASE IN USDA ESTIMATE -- POSSIBLY TO 210 MILLION TONS - IS JUSTIFIABLE SOLELY FROM OPTIMISTIC BREZHNEV STATEMENT, WHICH HAS BEEN MENTIONED TO SEVERAL SOVIETS SINCE THAT TIME, AND NONE NEGATED. SUCH INCREASE WOULD PROBABLY RESULT IN IMPROVED ACCURACY OF THIS ESTIMATE IN RELATION TO FINAL OUTTURN. (B) FYI, AFTER COMPLETING ABOVE, WE HAVE LEARNED THAT BREZHNEV MADE COMMENT ON CROP TODAY IN TV INTERVIEW WITH FRENCH JOURNALIST FOR BROADCAST IN FRANCE, WHICH WAS ALSO SHOWN HERE. HIS PROGNOSIS WAS LESS ENTHUSIASTIC THAN HIS COMMENT TO HARRIMAN. HE SAID: "LAST YEAR THE CROP WAS BAD, SUFFERING SERIOUSLY FROM DROUGHT. WEATHER HAS NOT FAVORED US AGAIN THIS YEAR, BUT WE HAVE COPEDEDAS A RESULT WE SHALL BRING IN A VERY GOOD HARVEST OF GRAIN." THIS DOES NOT CHANGE OUR VIEW THAT CURRENT 205 ESTIMATE COULD BE RAISED TO 210.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, CROP DESTRUCTION, GRAINS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 OCT 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MOSCOW15719
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760376-0454
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761081/aaaacson.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AGRE
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 MAY 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <10 SEP 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: USSR: 1976 GRAIN HARVEST
TAGS: EAGR, UR, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006